

no intention of keeping faith with heretics. Both on political and religious grounds he was a firm believer in the unity of the Church. Schism in the Church was, he believed, the source of division in the empire. It was incompatible with his imperial power and his dynastic ambition. It had indeed given a powerful impulse to the growth of the territorial power of the princes at the imperial expense. In self-defence the reformers had sought the alliance of the princes, and their alliance had reduced Charles to a nullity. It was a possible contingency that the next emperor might be not merely not a Habsburg, but a Protestant. From his point of view, therefore, the suppression of Protestantism was a necessity. He was, moreover, an orthodox if to some extent a reforming Churchman, and with a Reformation that had disrupted the Church he had no sympathy. He had cruelly persecuted heretics in the Netherlands and Spain, and he would have suppressed them in Germany in 1521 and 1531 if he had been free to do so. The treaties with the Protestants had been but the makeshifts of policy; and now that Francis and Henry, whom he had left in the lurch at Crépy, were wasting their strength in continued war for his benefit, and the sultan was peaceably inclined, the Protestants should at last feel the force of his arm if they refused to accept his terms. The General Council or the sword should put an end to the politico-religious question and establish both the imperial supremacy and the unity of the Church in the empire.

In deference to his insistence Paul III. at last summoned the Council to meet at Trent. It proved absolutely unworkable as an instrument of accommodation. It was orthodox and papal, and the Protestants would have nothing to do with it, and insisted on the convention of a free National Council. Unfortunately for them, their strength was at this critical juncture seriously impaired by personal motives and interests. The league was, in fact, practically impotent. Like every German combination, it made shipwreck on the rock of particularism, and Philip of Hesse laboured in vain to frustrate the statecraft of the astute Charles by the reanimation of the co-operative spirit Charles' statecraft, now that he was free to grapple with the situation, had, in truth, a comparatively easy task in dividing the Protestants and uniting the Catholic